

Chapter 7. Cultural Resources

Meadow Vista was inhabited by the Nisenan or Southern Maidu at the time of Euro-American contact. The Hill Nisenan, commonly referred to as Maidu, differed from the Valley Nisenan of the Sacramento Valley in dialect, environment, and lifestyle. The Nisenan, together with Maidu and Konkow, are part of a subgroup of the California Penutian linguistic family. Hill Nisenan occupied territory that stretched from the American and Cosumnes Rivers in the south to the Yuba and Bear Rivers in the north. Their villages were located on ridges and large flats along major streams.

The Nisenan Maidu lifestyle was based on hunting and gathering from rich natural resources, including abundant game animals, fish, fowl, fruits, and acorns. The Nisenan Maidu established many villages in the foothills, moving among them in seasonal migrations based on the weather, food gathering, and other necessities.

Grinding stones still exist on the east side of Placer Hills Road in front of the former Meadow Lark Bookstore. Arrowheads have been found throughout the area. The burial grounds were near the Bear River, the west boundary of Meadow Vista. Richard Simpson, a Meadow Vista native from a pioneer family, wrote a book called *Ooti* that chronicles the process of turning acorns into a food staple. The photographs and text of Simpson's book record Lizzie Enos, a local Nisenan Maidu woman, grinding, leeching, and cooking acorns into the porridge and bread that were dietary staples of the Nisenan Maidu. The blue oak and black oak trees that were such a prominent feature of the landscape of the foothills during that period were revered by the Nisenan Maidu for their majestic appearance and the live-giving nourishment they provided.

The discovery of gold in the area during the middle 19th century resulted in an enormous influx of EuroAmericans and the subsequent near extinction of the Hill Nisenan population, culture, and language.

Previous Cultural Resource Surveys

This section is based on a record search for the Plan area conducted by the North Central Information Center in May 1994 as part of the Meadow Vista Community Plan update. According to the Center's records, seven archeological field surveys have been conducted in portions of the Plan area. Approximately one quarter of the Plan has been previously surveyed at some level. Two of the largest surveys, Lindstrom (1982) and Woodward (1981) are over 10 years old and were not complete or comprehensive field inspections.

Substantially less than one quarter of the Plan area has been surveyed comprehensively according to current standards. The older studies did not always address historic archeological resources or standing structures. In addition, ground visibility conditions can change considerably in 10 years and it is possible that resources hidden by vegetation or buried at the time of the initial survey are visible under current conditions.

Approximately 50 cultural resource sites have been recorded (with completed site records) or reported (noted only in report texts) in or immediately outside the Plan area. Some of these resources are characterized as sites or buildings, while others are isolated artifacts or features. Two of these resources have historic and prehistoric components. Six of the sites have been assigned official state trinomials (CA-Pla-XXXX), but the rest have not yet been formally reviewed and processed.

The prehistoric sites include three former village sites (middens), many with associated surface artifacts and bedrock mortars (grinding rocks) (CA-Pla-540, 541, and 544). Eighteen other sites consist primarily of bedrock mortars, some with scattered artifacts or debris from stone tool manufacturing (subsurface deposits may be present at some of these sites but testing was not done during the survey phase). These include CA-Pla-542 and 543, HN-1, 16898PLCRH, and Lindstrom Site Nos. 1-3 and 5-12. Three isolated prehistoric specimens were also noted by Lindstrom.

Historical Archeological and Architectural Resources

The historic archeological sites or features include four formally recorded historic archeological sites and 19 recorded buildings. The Placer County Cultural Resources Inventory includes historical resources inventory forms for 20 properties in the Plan area. Nineteen of these are buildings, primarily houses, and one is a prehistoric archeological site. The four archeological features include the Bear River and Bowman Feeder Canals (which were recorded on the same record form), one rock wall alignment, and two historic dumps (Lindstrom's Site Nos. 4, 5, and 8).

An unrecorded section of the Boardman Canal also crosses the project. A few miles to the southwest, a section of this canal is recorded (CA-Pla-670-H). Several isolated features were noted by Lindstrom, including a chrome mine, a concrete slab, and a series of 10 possible mining glory holes. A possible historic/ethnographic cemetery, dating to 1857, was reported verbally by archeologist Susan Lindstrom for a location just along the boundary of the Community Plan (these are the burial

grounds referred to earlier near the Bear River that were relocated in the 1930s and called "Sunny View Indian Cemetery"). No further information is available at this time.

Area canals or ditches include the Gold Hill, Bear River, Upper Bowman, Bowman Feeder, and Boardman. Many of these features were first constructed during the Gold Rush or around the turn of the century. In spite of their modernization, they are considered potential historic resources. Original sections still exist, and associated features such as early-day artifacts may be buried alongside the alignments. As noted above, three of these canals have been partially recorded as historic archeological features during the course of archeological field surveys.

No National Register of Historic Properties (NRHP), State Landmarks, or California Points of Interest are located in the Meadow Vista Community Plan area. The nearest such feature is the route of the First Transcontinental Railroad (now the Union Pacific line) located just to the east. This is designated at Landmark 780 with monuments at Auburn and Colfax. Clipper Gap (bordering the Plan area), a station on the railroad and established in 1856, is listed in the California Inventory of Historic Resources. Six of the bridges within or directly adjacent to the Plan area have been evaluated by Caltrans and do not meet the criteria for listing in the NRHP.

Areas of Sensitivity

The use of high, medium, and low sensitivity indicates the relative probability of archeological and historical sites in a given area in comparison to other areas in the same region. The most significant cultural resource could be found in a low-sensitivity area. Based on the information concerning historical resources, and previous investigations, the Plan area appears to reflect the full range of sensitivity values. Zones along the Bear River and adjacent to the several smaller drainages, especially in the valley-like flats, are of the highest sensitivity. Historical sensitivity is high in these same areas and includes other zones, such as the old roadway margins, canal routes, and settlement areas like Meadow Vista and Christian Valley. Ridge tops and moderate slopes are estimated to be of moderate sensitivity, while steeper slopes are likely to be the least sensitive.

Paleontological Resources

Paleontological resources are not included in this section because such resources have not been identified nor are they expected to be found in the Plan area.

IMPACTS

Criteria for Determining Significance

Regulations for dealing with historical properties are outlined in Appendix K of the State CEQA Guidelines and Public Resources Code Section 21083.2. Under CEQA, the impacts on historical and prehistoric resources must be considered. An impact is considered significant if the project will cause damage to an important or unique cultural resource that:

- is associated with an event or person of recognized significance in California or American history or of recognized scientific importance in prehistory (III-A);
- can provide information that is both of demonstrable public interest and useful in addressing scientifically consequential and reasonable or archaeological research questions (III-B);
- has a special or particular quality as oldest, best example, largest, or last surviving example of its kind (III-C);
- is at least 100 years old and possesses substantial stratigraphic integrity (III-D); or
- involves important research questions that historical research has shown can be answered only with archaeological methods (III-E).

Appendix K of the State CEQA Guidelines also states that if avoidance of important archaeological resources is infeasible, the effects of the project on the qualities that make the resource important should be mitigated.

A similar and related set of criteria is that used to determine eligibility for inclusion of a site in the NRHP (36 Code of Federal Regulations 800). The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of state and local importance that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and:

1. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
2. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
3. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Relevant Community Plan Goals, Policies, and Implementation Programs

The Community Plan includes various key goals, policies, and implementation programs that call for the protection of cultural resources.

Require Site-Specific Cultural Resources Studies

Require that Historical Sites Be Avoided and Protected from Destruction or Demolition

Impact Analysis

As noted, less than one quarter of the Plan area has been surveyed comprehensively according to current standards, and cultural resources may be evident now that were not visible in previous surveys.

Community Plan goals, policies, and implementation programs require discretionary development projects to identify and protect important cultural resources. Preparation of a site-specific survey and report is required of all projects subject to a PTHP.

Implementation of the Vegetation Management Project could result in the possible disturbance of documented or undocumented cultural resources (archaeological or historical resources). This impact is considered significant because the project could disturb potentially important cultural resources and because the various sites and historical structures contribute to the historical fabric of the area.

California Forest Practice Rules Requirements

All applicable Forest Practice Rules will apply to any PTHP undertaken pursuant to this PTEIR. The following Rules are particularly relevant for cultural resources. As part of the project description, these Rules will reduce many potential impacts to a less than significant level.

1. Regulations for a PTHP contents require a Confidential Archaeological Addendum as defined in 895.1 or a statement by the RPF that the PTHP has been surveyed in accordance with current Forest Practice rules and no additional sites have been found. (1092.9(f))
2. The Confidential Archaeological Addendum (895.1) and its contents (949.1) require that the archaeological survey by a qualified surveyor must discuss resources found and how they will be protected.(949.2, 929.6)

MITIGATION

1. Project areas will be surveyed by a qualified RPF or other qualified professional for potential archaeological and historical resources prior to project implementation.
2. No timber operations may occur on significant archaeological sites.
3. If an archaeological or historical site is discovered during vegetation management operations, work will immediately stop within 100 feet of the site and the CDF Director shall be notified. The significance of the resources shall be determined and necessary protection measures taken. For significant cultural sites that cannot be avoided, site-specific mitigation measures must be approved by the CDF Director.

Level of Significance Following Mitigation

With implementation of proposed mitigation measures, potential impacts to cultural resources will be reduced to a less than significant level.